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Water Dept. to get \$3 million from feds for desalination work

By John Canalis, Staff Writer

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LONG BEACH - The Long Beach Water Department will receive more than \$3 million in federal stimulus funding for its water desalination project, the U.S. Department of the Interior announced Wednesday.

Funding will go toward a \$20 million desalination testing program Long Beach Water is executing in southeast Long Beach near the Orange County line.

Stimulus funding will meet about 50 percent of the \$6 million the department had planned to spend over the next two years, said Long Beach Water Department spokesman Ryan Alsop.

The funding package "closes out the remaining amount of money we need" to complete the current phase of testing, Alsop said.

The department hopes to complete testing of the technology, which converts sea water into potable water, as early as the end of 2010.

Based on the results, water commissioners will then decide whether to seek approval to build a desalination plant somewhere in Long Beach, Alsop said.

The Long Beach Water Department typically receives about \$1 million a year for desalination research from congressional appropriations, Alsop said.

"This is a big bonus. It's always been hard work every year" to secure congressional earmarks, Alsop said.

The department will use the money to install filtration membranes, construct testing facilities, remove pipelines and restore the site, which is near Second Street and Studebaker Road.

It is unlikely the current site would be used for a future plant, Alsop said.

The Long Beach Desalination Project is the largest project of its kind in the United States.

The city department is one of about 27 beneficiaries of the ARRA, or stimulus, funds.

Agencies, which qualify for funding under a federal water title, plan to share in \$134.3 million dedicated to water reclamation and reuse and related projects.

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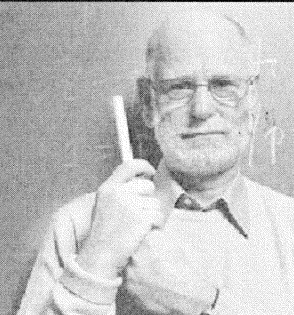


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Those selected for ARRA funds are to provide growing communities with new sources of clean water while promoting water and energy efficiency and environmental stewardship, according to the Long Beach Water Department.

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